

Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ)

# **EPA Environmental Justice Fact Sheet**

## ***EPA's Commitment to Environmental Justice***



EPA Administrator  
Christine Todd Whitman has  
reaffirmed the Agency's  
commitment to environmental  
justice as a "goal to be  
achieved for all communities  
and persons across this

Nation... when everyone, regardless of race, culture, or income, enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards..." In her August 9, 2001 memorandum, the Administrator directed EPA's senior managers to integrate environmental justice into all EPA policies, programs, and activities. In the following year, each Headquarter and Regional Office developed implementation plans to transform the Administrator's words into action, with measurable results. Each organization began deploying these Action Plans to Integrate Environmental Justice in fiscal year 2003. Inherently strategic in nature, these action plans represent the commitments of each office over the next 1-5 years.

The key elements of the Action Plan are: management accountability, internal/external stakeholder involvement, data collection/management, training, environmental justice assessment, and evaluation. The plan offers some flexibility for each office, yet also provides a consistent and holistic approach to environmental justice integration. OEJ's role is to provide direction and constructive feedback to the Regional and Headquarter offices on their implementation strategies and measurable results. OEJ is in the process of developing suggested performance measures for the next round of Action Plans to be submitted by each office on September 30, 2003.

Through the OEJ, the Agency provides leadership internal and external around the issues of environmental justice. The following information on EPA's activities is taken from our *Environmental Justice Biennial Accomplishments Report (2001-2002): Constructive*

*Engagement and Collaborative Problem-Solving* to be released in Spring 2003.

To obtain the complete Biennial Report, please contact the National Service Center for Environmental Publications at (800) 489-8190 and request document number <EPA-300-R-03-001>.

For more information on EPA's Environmental Justice Program, visit <[www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice](http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice)> or call (800) 962-6215.

### Regional Listening Sessions

In 2002, the Regional offices agreed to conduct Regional listening sessions to engage the participants in active discourse, on topics ranging from general to specific areas of common interest/concern, and to work effectively towards mutually beneficial solutions. OEJ developed basic guidelines for conducting these dialogues as interactive, solution-oriented dialogues conducted with the community, and in partnership with federal, state, Tribal, local and municipal government representatives. These dialogues are intended to demonstrate EPA's responsiveness in addressing environmental, health, and quality of life concerns. Several regions conducted at least one listening session in 2002 and details of these sessions are available upon request. Additional outreach activities across EPA are featured in the upcoming Biennial Report.

### Interagency Work Group (IWG) Revitalization Projects

In the year 2000, the IWG embarked on the first round of national demonstration projects in 2000. In just two years, these 15 projects have met with significant achievements. Through these projects, over 150 organizations and 11 federal agencies have established working relationships and secured a sum of more than \$15 million in public and private funding to address issues ranging from children's health to economic revitalization. As a result of these projects,

a multi-stakeholder collaborative model is emerging to address environmental justice. An EPA report on these projects, "Environmental Justice Collaborative Model: A Framework to Ensure Local Problem-Solving," is available at [www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/publications/ej/ej\\_annual\\_project\\_reports.html](http://www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/publications/ej/ej_annual_project_reports.html) >. Also, the International City/County Management Association convened a national forum last year called, "Collaborative Models to Achieve Environmental Justice," to examine these projects.

In Fall 2002, the IWG solicited nominations for a second round of demonstration projects, also referred to as "Environmental Justice Revitalization Projects." The goal of this second round is to develop a fully mature, multi-stakeholder collaborative model to address the multiple environmental, health, economic, and social concerns of communities disproportionately and adversely affected by environmental pollution. The selected revitalization projects will be announced in Spring 2003.

#### Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving Grant Program

In Summer 2003, OEJ will launch an Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving Grant Program for 15 non-profit community-based organizations. The goal of this \$1.5M grant program is to assist in the capacity building of community-based organizations who wish to engage in constructive and collaborative problem-solving by utilizing EPA tools to find viable solutions for their community's environmental justice issues.

#### Environmental Justice Small Grants Program

Since 1994, the Environmental Justice Small Grants program has provided financial assistance to community-based organizations working on local solutions to local environmental problems. From a pilot program with a \$500,000 budget and a \$10,000 limit per award, it has grown to \$1.3 million in FY02, with awards of \$20,000 each. To date, the program has awarded approximately \$16.4 million to 973 grant recipients and has a broad impact among communities with environmental justice issues. Small grants projects continue to address an array of environmental and human health issues such as childhood asthma, farmworker pesticide protection, fish consumption, indoor air quality, drinking water contamination, and lead poisoning prevention.

#### Environmental Justice Fundamentals Training

The Fundamentals of Environmental Justice Workshop explores the origins of the Environmental Justice movement, perceptions and definitions of environmental justice, laws pertaining to environmental justice, and provides an overview of Geographic Information Systems ("GIS"), and other analytical tools to help understand, integrate and address environmental justice issues. The goals of the workshop are to identify and address environmental justice issues. Participants learn to effectively engage in productive dialogue around the issues of environmental justice and promote constructive and collaborative problem-solving techniques. Equally important

is the goal to integrate aspects of environmental justice into the participants' work on a daily basis. These training sessions are a means to consistently integrate environmental justice into environmental programs.

The workshop is a product of the Environmental Justice Training Collaborative (EJTC), and led by OEJ. The EJTC began in 1998 when EPA's western regions responded to the growing need for better understanding of environmental justice. In the early stages, members developed a basic curriculum and worked with other partners to identify training needs and plan train-the-trainer events. More than 100 partners including federal, state, academia, tribal, industry, and community groups have formed an electronic listserv to stay connected on training matters. Over the past two years, the workshop has trained over 1,500 people across the country with participants from federal, state and local governments, and grassroots organizations, business and academia. The EJTC received an EPA bronze medal in 2002 for its outstanding work to help integrate environmental justice into the daily operations at EPA and across the country. OEJ is preparing additional training modules for permit writers and inspectors.

#### Alternative Dispute Resolution Training for Communities

On September 20-21, 2002, OEJ sponsored a pilot training session in El Monte, California. Thirty community representatives participated in this workshop to learn about basic dispute resolution techniques. The goal is to increase the communities' awareness of collaborative problem-solving as an option to litigation. The course was developed through a cooperative agreement with the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), in conjunction with Justice & Sustainability Associates. EPA's Region 9 staff participated in the session and were instrumental in the outreach to communities interested in attending the session in California. CBI is also developing six environmental justice dispute resolution case studies as a supplement to the workshop. Thanks to the success of this pilot session, a similar workshop is being planned for September 2003 in Memphis, Tennessee, for communities in the eight-state vicinity of EPA Region 4.

#### Environmental Careers Organization Internships

The Environmental Careers Organization (ECO) has been working with EPA to foster environmental opportunities ever since OEJ opened its doors back in 1992. Students receive practical experience working in fields such as science, engineering, law, computer science, political analysis, and more. To date, over \$36 million has been invested in this program called "Furthering Environmental Careers," which has given more than 2,200 students opportunities for on-the-job training and community involvement. By nurturing these students, OEJ also hopes to ingrain the concept of environmental justice in the next generation of environmental professionals.

The success of the EPA/ECO partnership has spawned another program with a direct benefit to communities. Since OEJ launched its Community Intern Program in 2000 more than 60 students have gained working

experience at the grassroots level. This program has allowed students to assist community organizations on environmental issues. To learn more about the program, visit <http://www.eco.org>.

#### Environmental Law Institute Studies

The Environmental Law Institute (ELI) published *Opportunities for Advancing Environmental Justice: An Analysis of US EPA Statutory Authorities* as an in-depth look at the major environmental laws governing air and water quality, waste management, pesticide and chemical regulation, and public right-to-know. The report also identifies specific statutory authorities for promoting environmental justice in the full range of EPA program functions: standard setting and permitting, enforcement, delegation of program authority to States, information gathering, and financial assistance. Subsequently, ELI published *A Citizen's Guide to Using Environmental Laws to Secure Environmental Justice* as a "plain English" resource to familiarize communities with federal statutes and find opportunities for meaningful public involvement in environmental decisionmaking. These studies were made possible through a cooperative agreement with OEJ. In addition, the Environmental Law Institute, Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, and the United Church of Christ are developing a video version. This video can be used as a training tool to show how environmental laws can be used to address pollution of the water, land, and air. It will also display the power of the people to use environmental laws to protect their communities. The video will be completed in Summer 2003.

#### National Academy of Public Administration Studies

The National Academy of Public Administrators (NAPA) issued a trilogy of reports through a cooperative agreement with OEJ. The reports encompass environmental justice at the federal, state, and local/municipal government levels. *Environmental Justice in EPA Permitting: Reducing Pollution in High Risk Communities is Integral to EPA's Mission* (December 2001) examines practical areas for integration into site-specific air, water, and waste permits. In *Models for Change: Efforts by Four States to Address Environmental Justice* (June 2002), NAPA examines several crosscutting and innovative approaches by four distinct states as they address environmental justice concerns. The third report, to be released in Spring 2003, will focus on the role of local land-use and zoning practices in creating, addressing, and/or alleviating environmental justice issues.

#### Business/Industry Best Practices Study

OEJ commissioned the Marasco Newton Group to study industry-based perspectives on environmental justice. Entitled, "A Study of Industry's Views and Approaches Regarding Environmental Justice" demystifies the businesses' perspectives, and provides insight to their proactive efforts. The purpose of the study is to examine how environmental justice can be more effectively integrated into the corporate decisionmaking process. A draft report on their findings was released in December, 2002. The final version, due in Spring

2003, will highlight best industry practices that various businesses have adopted to address environmental justice issues when siting and permitting their facilities.

#### NEJAC Fish Consumption and Pollution Prevention Reports

Three years ago the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) shifted the focus of its national meetings on broad public policy issues with the goal of providing effective advice and cogent recommendations to EPA. Since 1999, the NEJAC has focused on the following issues: the permitting process, community-based health research models, federal agency environmental justice implementation, and fish consumption and water quality standards. Delivering salient advice and recommendations to the Agency on any given public policy issue requires the NEJAC's Executive Committee to convene a diverse, multi-stakeholder workgroup devoted to examining a specific policy issue and deliberating with the NEJAC on that issue. With the assistance of the Fish Consumption Workgroup, the NEJAC published its findings and recommendations on "Fish Consumption and Environmental Justice" in 2002. The NEJAC also completed a report entitled, "Advancing Environmental Justice Through Pollution Prevention." This report focuses on several approaches such as source reduction, waste minimization, sustainable development, and other innovative approaches to systematically reduce, eliminate, and/or prevent pollution.

#### Geographic Information Systems Workgroup

The Environmental Justice Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Workgroup was established to assist in the development of a national GIS-based environmental justice assessment tool. Once completed, this powerful tool will provide a robust set of indicators relevant to environmental justice and will greatly assist EPA in decisionmaking. The emphasis of this project is to consider which communities are disproportionately and adversely impacted by environmental risks; understand the social, economic, health environmental, and other factors associated with these risks; and develop approaches to address the communities' environmental justice issues. The Workgroup consists of representatives from both the GIS and environmental justice staffs from all the regional offices and several headquarter program offices. It is co-chaired by OEJ and the Office of Environmental Information.

#### 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Office of Environmental Justice

On November 20, 2002, the EPA celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Office of Environmental Justice. Ten years ago, OEJ (then Office of Environmental Equity) was established to promote environmental protection for all people, including those in minority and/or low-income communities. EPA marked this occasion with a special program that highlighted the Agency's progress toward integrating environmental justice in all policies, programs, and activities, as affirmed by Administrator Christine Todd Whitman in her memorandum, dated August 9, 2001.



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